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SUBJECT: CODEL MURTHA PRESSES MALIKI FOR POLITICAL PROGRESS

Classified By: Deputy Chief of Mission Patricia A. Butenis for reasons
1.4 (b) and (d).

[¶1.](#) (C) SUMMARY: CODEL Murtha and Ambassador Crocker met with PM Maliki on November 23. Mr. Murtha acknowledged that he sees improvements in Iraq but repeatedly stated that the American people are impatient because necessary steps have not been taken and that they want to see dramatic action by PM Maliki and the Iraqi Government. He noted the one trillion dollar cost of the U.S. effort and said that U.S. domestic programs and our military are suffering as a result.

All four CODEL members pointed to the failure to pass key legislation and urged action on those issues. PM Maliki thanked the American people for their sacrifice in Iraq. Sectarianism is giving way to greater unity. With the improved security situation there will be progress on the economic and political fronts and 2008 should be a decisive year that will permit a reduction in U.S. forces. It is time, he said, for Iraqi forces to assume a greater role and for the Iraqis "to take responsibility for their own country." Mr. Murtha said that PM Maliki himself must show dramatic leadership. The PM repeated his prediction that 2008 will be a breakthrough year.

[¶2.](#) (C) CODEL Murtha met with GOI Prime Minister Maliki for almost an hour on November 23. The meeting was at the PM's residence. Mr. Murtha, Mr. Hobson, Mr. Dicks, Mr. Bishop, Ambassador Crocker and staff members attended. PM Maliki was accompanied by National Security Advisor Dr. Mowaffaq al-Rubaie and other staff.

[¶3.](#) (C) PM Maliki said he hopes that Mr. Murtha has seen a changed Iraq on this visit, with improvements in security, the economy, and other issues. He asked what difference there is between his last visit in January and this time. Mr. Murtha said that there are people out in the streets, security seems better and there seems to be a more positive attitude. Ambassador Crocker and General Petraeus are very complimentary about the PM's efforts and about what has been accomplished. PM Maliki affirmed that Iraq has changed markedly, that sectarianism and violence are giving way to greater unity, harmony, and cooperation. Also, the principles of national reconciliation are taking hold. It has been a successful beginning but more steps are necessary in order to follow up on this initial success. The Iraqi people want to break the cycle of fear. They want to see Iraqi institutions perform on their own.

[¶4.](#) (C) Mr. Murtha said that the American people are greatly concerned. We are spending nine billion dollars per month in Iraq. The military is suffering. Domestic programs have been hurt. We are not paying due regard to future threats. It has been almost five years and we have spent over one trillion dollars and there is great impatience. We need to see dramatic leadership. Mr. Murtha continued by saying that there is great confidence in Ambassador Crocker and General Petraeus, both are doing a tremendous job and progress has been made. Still, the American public wants to

see much more dramatic results. They have been told over and over that things are getting better but they have still lost confidence. There must be, for instance, much greater progress on legislation, a subject raised during Speaker Pelosi's visit last January.

¶15. (C) PM Maliki responded that he greatly appreciates the support of and the sacrifices made by the American people in Iraq. The American people want their loved ones home safe as much as Iraqis want to return to their homes safely. Progress in the legislative, economic and political fields has not been as good as it should have been, something due to the security situation. But with improvements in security 2008 should be a decisive year for gains in those areas, permitting a reduction in American forces and a strengthened bilateral U.S./Iraqi relationship. Security forces have demonstrably improved their performance. The Iraqi people have increased confidence in their government. The people recognize Al Qaeda and terrorists for what they are. These are elements of power for the GOI. The American people should recognize that the Iraqis know that it is time to take responsibility for their own country.

¶16. (C) Mr. Hobson said that he appreciates that progress has been made and congratulated PM Maliki. But the American people respond to the media and one reported issue is the lack of progress on legislation. He pointed to the absence of movement on laws regarding provincial powers and on petroleum revenues. He said he hopes that PM Maliki will help us stay the course by making progress in these areas. Mr. Murtha pointed out that all four CODEL members are appropriations sub-committee members and responsible for providing the money for U.S. operations in Iraq. Mr. Dicks recognized the difficulty of establishing a viable government in the midst of violence. He had visited here in February

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and left convinced that the surge could work and lower the level of violence. He said he hopes that the opportunity will be used to pass legislation. Violence is down, he said, but will it last and will the opportunity be used to increase jobs, move the economy, deliver electricity and give people hope?

¶17. (C) PM Maliki said "definitely." It is crucial that improvement continue and that the Iraqis themselves be responsible for it. To date, U.S. forces have played the greatest role in achieving the improved security situation in the country. Now it is time for the Iraqi forces to take a greater role. The war nearly destroyed Iraq. Terrorists wanted to make this country a center for terrorism. The fight waged here is one to defend the region along with the rest of the world from terrorism. Iraq must find stability and be able to reconstruct, using its own resources. More progress is needed in the parliament and we are working toward it. Aid will still be needed. It is unjust, he interjected, that Iraq must pay debts for weapons used against the Iraqi people and neighboring countries (by the Saddam Hussein regime). But Iraq is on its way toward democracy and establishing stable relations with its neighbors.

¶18. (C) Mr. Bishop said the U.S. Congress responds to the will of the people. The American people see lack of progress on important measures such as hydrocarbon and de-Baathification laws. He said he hopes that the PM will move forward on those issues with despatch. PM Maliki responded that there is legislation on the books that is still viable. He said that this legislation must be changed so that it is in harmony with the new Iraq. Nonetheless, it is an exaggeration of the media that legislation is absent. Regarding de-Baathification, PM Maliki said, "In fact, we don't have a problem." Baathists are in both civilian and military positions, and others have been pensioned. A de-Baathification law is not going to change this. Such a law is more a message of reconciliation than a practical

measure. Mr. Bishop returned to the failure to pass a hydrocarbon law providing for equitable distribution of revenues and investment guidelines. PM Maliki said that the oil belongs to all Iraqis, something on which all agree. The law will be for collection of revenues and their distribution according to population. Some revenues must be retained by the central government. The principle of a unified Iraq requires that the government be able to undertake projects needed by the country as a whole. Regarding investment, PM Maliki said that the issue there is the extent to which provinces can enter into contractual arrangements independent of the federal government, a separate issue from the hydrocarbon law itself.

¶9. (C) Mr. Murtha said that he spoke as a friend who has voted for every appropriation for Iraq. But he said that there is a change in Americans' attitude. This is a problem the Iraqis themselves must solve. He told the PM that he must inspire the parliament to act with his own leadership. PM Maliki predicted a breakthrough in 2008 that will reduce the financial burden on the U.S. He repeated his appreciation to Americans, Republicans and Democrats, for their support of Iraq.

¶10. (U) CODEL Murtha did not have the opportunity to clear this cable before their departure.
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